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## West Valley gains ground as solar hub

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The West Valley has become a key destination for the onslaught of solar companies and suppliers looking to establish a supply-chain cluster and gain access to California markets. Linamar Corp. this week added its name to a growing list of companies locating operations in the West Valley. The Canadian company announced plans to open a manufacturing facility in Glendale that initially will employ 52 people.



Friedman

Local real estate experts and economic development officials said the West Valley is luring industry players for a number of reasons, including an abundance of available industrial space, open freeways, and proximity to both the California market and similar manufacturers.

"I think companies are looking at where they can create a quality of life for their employees (and) where they can retain them."

# SOLAR: Goodyear says it has seen increased interest from solar companies

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said Brian Friedman, Glendale's economic development director.

Linamar's plan is to manufacture power conversion units for Stirling Energy Systems' SunCatcher, a concentrated solar power system. Linamar has leased a 76,000-square-foot building in the Glendale Airpark.

Stirling is based in Scottsdale, but much of its work is being done in the West Valley, including a 1.5-megawatt test power plant that was built just north of a Salt River Project generating station in Peoria.

Linamar is one of two major suppliers supporting Stirling. The other, Tower Automotive, is leasing about 46,000 square feet at a former Rubbermaid facility in Goodyear.

Linamar officials did not respond by press time to requests for comment on their selection.

Stirling spokeswoman Janette Coates said the company hadn't planned to have a heavy West Valley supply chain, but the facilities there matched what their partners needed.

Lou Finocchiaro, first vice president of Cassidy Turley BRE Commercial in Phoenix, which represented the landlord in the Linamar deal, said the West Valley is being selected for solar facilities based on several factors.

"The West Valley is in the closest proximity to the solar farms," he said.

Linamar considered several sites in addition to the one at the Glendale Airpark.



Stirling Energy Systems' SunCatcher will have parts made by Tower Automotive in Goodyear and Linamar Corp. in Glendale.

PATRICK OGBORN/PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

including eight in the East Valley and three in Phoenix, Finocchiaro said.

The West Valley solar rush kicked off in January, when Suntech Power Holdings Co. Ltd. announced it was moving to Goodyear. At the time, officials from the Chinese solar panel manufacturer cited the area as a potential hub for distribution, particularly to California and the Southwest. That facility

is on schedule to open later this year.

Goodyear has gotten increased interest from solar companies since the Suntech announcement, and it is a finalist for a handful of operations, said Harry Paxton, the city's economic development director.

"It put us on the map, and to a very large degree it put the West Valley on the map," he said.

Renewable energy has been an economic development priority for Glendale for the past three years, and the city is starting to reap the fruits of its labor.

Along with the Linamar deal, Glendale has handed installer Master Solar Supply and utility-scale solar developer Southwest Solar Technologies Inc., which works on storage technologies. It also is home to Glendale Energy LLC, a landfill gas operation that supplies power to the local grid, Friedman said.

Andrew Jaffe, vice president of sales and leasing for Commercial Properties Inc. in Tempe, said developers in the West Valley built a lot of industrial space prior to the real estate crash, and owners are looking to get it leased.

The combination of lower prices and available buildings has worked well for West Valley cities.

"They can take a box warehouse and make it into a manufacturing facility," he said. Jaffe, who was part of the team that lured Suntech to Goodyear, said he is seeing increased interest from solar companies in the West Valley.

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- Linamar Corp.: [www.linamar.com](http://www.linamar.com)
- Tower Automotive: [www.towerautomotive.com](http://www.towerautomotive.com)
- Suntech Power Holdings Co. Ltd.: [www.suntech-power.com](http://www.suntech-power.com)
- Commercial Properties Inc.: [www.cpi2.com](http://www.cpi2.com)
- Cassidy Turley BRE Commercial: [www.cassidyturley.com](http://www.cassidyturley.com)



Paxton